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First distinctions towards an ecology of liberation

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to analyze the logical steps necessary to recover the material, following Enrique Dussel's philosophy. The study is based on his early insights and on the interpretation of nature as a cosmos accessible to humanity. The methodology includes a review of Dussel's texts, emphasizing proximity and proxemics as categories of his philosophy. Findings reveal an economic and ecological sub-architecture in Dussel's work. The discussion suggests the relevance of this sub-architecture for a proper interpretation of his work and for the development of an ecology of liberation.

Keywords: poiesis, praxis, liberation, negativity, ecological.

* This translation was made using artificial intelligence and human review. All quotations were translated to maintain idiomatic continuity in the reading. The quotations used in this document are not official translations. The text is originally written in Spanish. This translation was published alongside the original language version.

The starting point is to think, along with Dussel, about the logical steps from the initial minimal distinctions towards the recovery of the material. To achieve this, we revisit some of his early impressions before the reading and recovery he did of Marx in the early 1980s. The beginning is nature interpreted as cosmos that becomes matter to the extent of human accessibility. Then, as a logical-natural consequence, humanity is framed within the necessary economy, as it is interpreted as a substantive unity. From there, poietics; that is, human production (it could not be otherwise) of difficult discernment because it is perhaps the first text to make this material aspect of the human explicit. Finally, some considerations that we believe should be considered not only for the correct interpretation of Dussel's work but also for the possible paths towards an ecological perspective in the strict sense.

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In exile and with no available bibliography, our author writes a programmatic outline of what will be his version of the Philosophy of Liberation (1975), but from the categories he had worked on some time before. The first of these, the starting point of his philosophy, is proximity as a meeting of the One with the Other, the practical subject-subject relationship (praxis) par excellence. This defines his politics (the face-to-face) as the primary philosophy. In the fourth chapter of the book, he shifts to the category of proxemics, as the meeting of the One (subject) with the Other (nature); which will guide his reflection definitively on the economy. At this stage, there are four sub-stages that will be separated for analytical purposes, but which assume a unique method that, being a continuation of one another, constitute a sub-architecture of the economy. It is, to some extent, his first step towards the ecology of liberation, which, however, begins to raise some themes that he will later rediscover up to the 16 theses of Political Economy (2014). We insist that this sub-architecture is directly related to the last one he proposes starting from the 20 Theses of Political Philosophy (2006); namely, it begins with ecology, continues with economy, and ends with culture.

1. Cosmos, Nature, Matter

In the face of a certain realism that prioritizes material cosmos (such as standard Marxism à la Althusser and the scientific materialism typical of Soviet-style socialism), and also facing an idealism (whose highest culmination is the German world around 1800) that asserts the priority of consciousness and disregards material issues, Dussel will not deny the possibility of subsuming both positions but will articulate them in a more creative way that avoids the false dilemma of realism-idealism, as if there were only one way to understand the extremes. Therefore, liberation philosophy asserts: "the real anteriority of the cosmos (ordo realitatis), the existential apriority of the world (ordo cognoscendi), and the economic interpretation of nature (ordo operandi)."[1] In this same methodological arrangement, this text traverses each moment, as a future research program, which may not be followed again, but with it, has established the definitive places of each abstract and concrete level of the recovery of material that will define the architecture of his entire work.

The real physical cosmos is a totality with unity, coherence, and substance. The cosmos, though partially known, is interpreted through the interpretation of the most immediate and accessible nature. There are three orders of interpretation, representing the unfolding of the cosmic totality, from greater to lesser accessibility: cosmos, nature, and matter. However, matter is included in nature, and nature is part of the cosmos. It is nature that materially constitutes the world, but this is a priori to the human; moreover, matter is what we transform into culture, a transition from Nature to Culture, i.e., a level beyond the merely material. It says:

> (...) man is not primarily a 'comprehender of being as world,' but, before that, a 'constructor of the cosmos as nature,' as culture. [...]. Man's primary need, we repeat, is not to know theoretically, but to eat practically. But man's appetite for eating is human, not purely animal; and from this primary human need arises the first act or human intentionality: the constitution of the cosmos as a possible satisfier, for which things are seen as material for

[1] Enrique Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación* (Mexico: FCE, 1977), § 4.1.2.1.

possible instruments in the face of a poietic intelligence stalking its surroundings like a feline before its prey.[2]

It is also not a matter of a prelation of needs; there is urgency to cover some of them before others. And in meeting the first, the following ones are covered. Thus, it is a spiral where, effectively, material needs are covered before any other. The discourse that privileges the contemplation of the cosmos, the admiration of nature, or the paradigm of consciousness that constitutes the rest of the cosmos is clearly ideological because it obscures such urgent needs. Poietic intelligence is not prior to practical intelligence but simultaneous. The important thing is its emergence and the articulation between both.

In this sense, the "real anteriority of the cosmos" means that there is something given, something we receive as a gift; that is, in the present reality surrounding me, it is materiality accumulated from time immemorial. It is updated ancestry. In other words, all existing things that were formed over billions of years are prior to humanity. Thus, the human drama is the ultimate synthesis of this natural evolution. But it is not reduced to the natural; neither is its eating animal, nor its way of hunting, etc. Everything it does is human, though it presumes a certain animality that is intrinsic to its humanity; but this aspect of human doing is irreducibly human.[3] Even its way of interpreting things, both as satisfiers and as excess or waste, of uselessness in the exuberance of art, for example.

It is evident, to those familiar with the author's work, that the categories will not be used in the same way afterward, as it implies reading Marx. Matter ceases to be that cosmic element underlying history, to become simply "what" something is made with; previously nonexistent. With this human (not animal) intervention of things (of material reality), it is possible to know the rest of the cosmos. The argument of some ecological stance that there is an aspect of insignificance in the human merely for "arriving" at the end of natural evolution is invalid. Moreover, it is accepted that the human is just another animal in evolution among many others; and, with this, it is necessary to accept as a consequence an anachronistic diet, like a prehistoric collector, etc. Such a stance is unsustainable due to the centrality, or in any case, the supreme meaning of the human along with its material circumstance being unquestionable.

Material satisfiers are increasingly scarce and, moreover, become irreplaceable, despite the technologism that believes it can find solutions to everything by substituting the absence of "organic," traditional, natural food with lab-manufactured products, such as all those new agricultural techniques for producing industrial food. For this reason, philosophy must be critical, or it is not. Philosophy, all theoretical thinking, that obscures this ecological reality is complicit with the systems that impose their technology (at the eminently material level, that of poiesis) and their politics (praxis). We will continue in this line of negativity (as victim, following Hegel but surpassing him) and necessity (as lack of-, as deprivation, following Sartre and surpassing him as well), though not explicitly.

[2] Enrique Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción* (Bogota: Nueva América, 1984), 29.

[3] Enrique Téllez, "La soberanía del encargo. Responsabilidad en Dussel y Ellacuría. Implicaciones para una política mundial," *Práxis educacional* 19, no. 50 (2023): e12002.

2. Physical, Living, Personal Substantiality

To distinguish the concept of substantiality, Dussel proposes, following Zubiri, the concept of substantiality, defined as the unity of all independent components of a system. Precisely to develop a theory of reality that does not simply identify reality and subjectuality, he introduced a terminological distinction: the radical structure of all reality, even though it involves a moment of subjectuality, is specific only to reality as subjectual. Substantiality expresses the fullness of entitative autonomy. The priority in relation to reality as such lies not in substantiality but in substantiality. Substantiality and subjectuality are two irreducible moments of reality, and the moment of substantiality is prior to that of subjectuality.[4] Every subject is substantial. Thus, placing physical reality before reality interpreted from subjectivity is the same methodological order as that of current natural science narratives. On the contrary, the opposing stance might be valid only from an anthropocentric perspective; but it would not explain the fact of natural evolution. And in a certain way, it would also not explain human evolution. Therefore, the adoption of the substantial moment is a priori to the subjective moment.

The 'physical substantiality' that constitutes nature includes 'living substantiality,' of which 'personal substantiality' is only a very small part in quantitative terms, but not in qualitative terms. The living emerges from this physical substantiality of the non-living. The unity of the cosmos provides the possibility for the emergence of the living; and within the living, human living is also an emergence, but as the ultimate culmination of the cosmos, capable of giving meaning to the rest of the cosmic totality. Consequently, man is the head of the new phylum inaugurating a species. And as he is the only animal that possesses strict individual substantiality, he turns out to be the only animal whose phylactic unity is strict and rigorous essential specificity. Only the human species is strictly a species.[5]

Every living being presumes evolution towards an increase with greater possibilities of continuity and pluriversality. In this sense, life (still very generally) poses three issues: 'living substantiality,' 'phyletic multiplication of the individual into species,' and 'evolution through a process of meta-speciation.' Well seen, it is a deployment of multiple determinations of the living from an evolutionary perspective. From the most basic cellular living organism to human living, along with its reproduction and desirable cultural increase. Dussel says:

> The human species is made up of distinct individuals, entities that operate history (res eventualis and not merely natural). The content of the species is analogical, with similarity, but with individual distinction (and not mere difference). It is a species that has history, world history; they are individuals with biographies. The entire metaphysics of exteriority and liberation hinges on the sui generis constitution of human substantiality, absolute closure. Freedom, responsibility, separate and independent totality with semiotic function before the entirety of the physical or living cosmos and even before all other individuals of the human species. The only free thing, that has a world; the other.[6]

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[4] Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre la esencia* (Madrid: FXZ-Alianza, 2008), 87.

[5] And adds: "*Hence, the human species is the only one rigorously definable. It is not, therefore, a coincidence that only the human has been given a rigorous definition by proximate genus and ultimate difference. Naturally, this leaves open the problem of the real value of that definition*," (editor's translation), Zubiri, *Sobre…*, 242-3.

[6] Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación…*, § 4.1.5.5.

It is here that a first approach to the necessary concept of the ecological is ventured: Nature is constitutive of the human; it is concretely inhospitable and, "advanced threateningly toward the erotic [...], where the human being will make his home: ecological then [...]. Thus arises the human-cosmos dialectic, the emergence of nature as habitat".[7] If nature is our home and is being transformed into raw material for the purposes of a destructive system, then the critique advances toward the foundation of social movements that confront the destruction of the natural. This foundation is human life on the planet, as home. This will later constitute the material principle of ethics in its two formulations, positive and negative; as well as its eventual formulation in the three constellations (already in politics) that imply greater argumentative complexity. For now, there is no doubt that the field of the political has methodological priority, but there is also no doubt about the importance of technology in concrete terms, material in abstract terms, as constitutive of true liberation. Economics not as a mere econometric science descriptive of capitalism (as it abounds in academia), but rather economic, as the science of material enjoyment in terms of natural scarcity.

3. Economic

It is common to confuse chrematistics, which deals with prices, and economics, which deals with the practical-productive relationship; however, the latter is defined by the relationship between the One and the Other, through the product of the relationship between humanity and nature. Hence its importance for an ecological liberation: because it encompasses the complexity of all possible relationships. Every intra-human relationship is mediated by production, exchange, distribution, and consumption. The most extreme communism took economics as a perspective to think through everything; it reduced politics (and all social life) to a single possible relationship according to the laws of an 'historical materialism' tailor-made. Capitalism today does something very similar in terms of dismantling political institutions; in other words, politics hinders its full realization. Fundamentally, the belief is that capitalist economics would lead to the most sublime freedom by dismantling the state so that the free competition of market productive forces leads to happiness.

Under the slogan of economics as proposed here—'something is produced for someone'—we can glimpse the relationship between praxis and poiesis, between practice and production. It is a circuit of life at a material, concrete, normative, and institutional level; and, in its positive moment of alienation and negative moment of liberation. Historically, there was a qualitative leap when societies discovered the dual aspect of each element of nature, both natural (without human intervention) and produced (human product); that is, as use value and as exchange value. Another huge leap occurred as the productive relationship became more sophisticated, as seen in the techniques of war and the use of abundant metals. Thus, domination among humans, through the product of their labor (some variant of possession), or through their practical relationship (some variant of slavery), was very local until the conquest of America, where the planetarization of this combination (without neglecting that there could be much more) was completed. Only with the rise of capitalism do we begin to talk about imperialism, colonization, world-system, etc., in literally global terms. At the methodological level, dialectical description is carried out from parts to the whole and scientific description, from the foundation to its constituent parts. Therefore, it is necessary to rise

[7] Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación...*, § 4.1.6.3.

from the abstract (private enterprise, country, etc.) to the concrete (global economy, dependency, etc.). Dussel says:

> The ultimate reference of any economic system is undifferentiated human labor; that is, laboriousness, labor as labor (indeterminate, unconditional, indivisible formulation of the human-nature relationship): living labor. [… that] produces the entity, crystallized or objectified labor (the product as product).[8]

Only with the detection of the foundation of economic systems, setting it as the starting point of economic science, now in a strict sense, do we advance to the proper description of the historical-concrete content of the foundation that defines a historical system, or specific social formation. The economics of liberation deals with an economy of exteriority; always existing as living labor,[9] as something other than capital; always as exteriority to any possible system of domination that has no value, because it is a creator of value like nature itself. And this is the point of intersection with ecology, in the strict sense because both, the human and the natural, have been undermined by modernity (and its more concrete ramifications) in a broad sense.

Production, therefore, expands its meaning from being mere manufacturing, as a process whose result is the product, to being the subjectivation of the object, as 'living labor'. For Hegel, reality is a product of thought, while for Marx, reality is what is produced, what is worked. "Reality, and reality as reality, is the product of labor and its ontological horizon of understanding, if I may use the neologism: laboriousness".[10] This laboriousness is the relationship between the human and the natural, in another moment called proxemia (someone-something, face-thing), to distinguish it from proximity (face-to-face). The entire first part of his philosophy of production deals with the European historical reconstruction, especially from the perspective of production and its relationship to economics, because Marx's theoretical work is a "critique of capitalist poiesis," where the confusion begins; that is, the articulation between the practical (face-to-face relationship and its different determinations) and the poietic (human-nature relationship, as technology, as production) and its nodal link, which is economics. If for Hegel, labor is becoming-for-itself; for Marx, labor can have this positive aspect, but also a negative one: a worker may produce something that belongs to another who is not the worker himself. And in this critical (negative) perspective lies the possibility of overcoming the current historical system. Therefore, it is essential to develop an ecological theory that assumes a general theory of production, technology, poiesis. It is essential because it is a topic covered up in global political decisions, where the abstract issue of globalizing diplomacy was privileged over the concrete reproduction of life in the long term. Moreover, it seems that sustainable development is a fictitious theory proposed not to resolve the so-called (and misunderstood) "environmental" problems. Dussel says:

> The relationship of the production process as such or its reference to consumption as such are abstract unless considered at their concrete level through the process of distribution-exchange, which assumes the political and economic relationship with other members of society.[11]

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[8] Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación…*, § 4.4.3.6.

[9] This assumes the recovery that took place from 1981 onward.

[10] Enrique Dussel, *Método para una Filosofía de la Liberación* (México: UG, 1974),137.

[11] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción…*, 80.

In other words, all the theories surrounding the narrative of sustainability are a cover-up of politics and economics; thus, it is essential to increase the level of debate about this perverse cover-up by large institutions that divert attention from social and political movements that, with good intentions, approach the problem but fail to see that sometimes they themselves are part of the problem by reorienting according to theoretical misunderstanding or a flawed political strategy.

The fact that causes the greatest asymmetry between the peripheries and the financial and industrial centers is the transfer of surplus value that concentrates in the center, the very origin of the rupture represented by the liberation philosophy as a counter-narrative paradigm. This happens because it concerns the lives of the most vulnerable in the peripheries, which sustain the economies of the center. Liberation ecology seeks to show the ideological meaning of developmentalism (the so-called developmentalist fallacy) of the center in terms of the liberation of externality. It involves an economy as a fair solidarity service, the material mediation, planned as a project, to produce food, housing, and clothing. Liberation, if not poietic and material, is not fully so. And this now presupposes, in the first third of the 21st century, at least its possibility in ecological terms, given the real and imminent possibility of our extinction from the world as we now know it. It is merely a prelude to a greater catastrophe.

4. Poietics

Our author clarifies that semiotics is a constituent part; it is the presupposition of poietics, or 'philosophy of production,' which deals with production in its broadest possible sense: it concerns the design and deployment of all the moments that constitute it, such as technology and art. Its focus is on formal coherence, as aesthetics,[12] in conjunction with functional, pragmatic coherence, inherent to technology. The stance of liberation philosophy towards conventional philosophy is to overcome the reduction of the clean part of human production, as instrumental reason. Formal coherence is not reduced to the beauty of the artifact, but to the cohesion, as the organic unity of parts that must function, but at the same time, endow the final form of the product. That is, it must endow with beauty framed within a specific culture. Material functionality and formal aesthetics are a dual aspect regarding both the useful and the beautiful.

> (...) formal coherence is intrinsic to the technological designing act from the very origin of projection, just as the form of the organism begins in the fertilized unicellular egg, formal coherence indicates a dual aspect: on one hand, the proper resolution of the functional problem of the artifact, from the fundamental subsystem to the last of the subsystems or elemental moments (the functional form of the parts); on the other hand, the final form of the product, visual, tactile, etc., which receives the evaluation of being beautiful or adequate (aesthetic value of difficult objective evaluation).[13]

The fundamental distinction focuses on the triple definition of human acts: the theoretical, the practical, and the feasible, as feasible, fabricative: productive at a concrete level. Indeed, praxis, poiesis, and theory are clearly distinct moments for liberation philosophy. Regarding praxis, we know

[12] In the years before his passing, Dussel worked on aesthetics. His first essay, "Seven Hypotheses for an Aesthetics of Liberation," was published in Enrique Téllez, *Para una estética de liberación decolonial* (Mexico: Lirio 2019), 17-53. A book on this topic will be published posthumously soon.
[13] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción...*, 197.

it involves deliberation about justice; theory deals with the demonstration of what is certain; but poietics deals with the projection of the artifact. Need is thus defined, provisionally, as lack of-, as deprivation; so that, "the productive act begins by ideating [as projection] positively what need in the negative demands".[14] The productive or designing subject is prior in time and methodologically has precedence over the thinking subject: the ego laboro is a presupposition of the ego cogito. It says:

> Science, technology, and art integrated, unitary, organic, and synergistically in the productive act of design allow this act to be named with a neologism (at least new by its meaning): designing or poietic act. [...]. Design is a distinct, unique, integrated, scientific-technological-aesthetic act: a technology-aesthetic-operational or a sui generis aesthetic-technological operation.[15]

The anthropological unit (human-nature) requires that labor be equally consubstantial with matter. That is, there is no matter prior to human labor, as historical materialism posits, but nature becomes matter as it is interpreted and materially intervened by the human. But we clarify: "there is no matter without labor. It may be a simple thing, but not matter. Thus, the a priori of matter is the productive activity that works the thing as matter to make something with it."[16] The reason for this intervention is human need; that is, the needy modifies their environment to assert themselves, from which their poiesis arises; but also, from the same arises their praxis due to living with others of their species. But the designer, the aesthete, the technologist must know how to position themselves between two extreme positions: theoretical methodism, which by being abstract suggests its inflexibility as a recipe to follow, without deviations or novelties in the course. The result is an artifact whose determination is the product of the mechanistic nature of its abstract method, difficult to comply with or impossible without the subordination of the empiricist. On the other hand, precisely, the empiricist who knows how to repair, "mend" (typical of more vulnerable classes), "implement," as a reader of manuals, but does not design, and only obeys the hierarchical order of the methodist. In the middle ground, the designer must possess "a projective realistic attitude," given that the mere "implementation" of a design without its economic, social, cultural, and political conditions is merely colonialism; but also, given that the "circumstantial empiricist" has no methodology of their own, will not overcome such imposed colonialism in a prior and antidemocratic manner. Thus, the projective realist deals with a "lógos, a rationality of the process adequate in the poietic act. It is today the orthós lógos poietikós: the right reason in making."[17] This productive reason (logós poietikós) begins to give meaning to the anthropological recovery spoken of in the method.

Indeed, speaking properly of a certain rationality in the process of producing something for someone, as we said at the beginning of this work, must lead us to the material rationality that will later be recovered as the material part.[18] And this is no small matter because their thought will depend even more solidly on this material part (and not necessarily on the issue of design), from (and around) which will be played out the ethically good, or the politically just, along with the aspect

[14] Dussel, *Filosofía de la Liberación...*, § 4.3.4.
[15] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción...*, 192.
[16] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción...*, 227.
[17] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción...*, 227.
[18] Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la Liberación* (Madrid: Trotta, 1998), chapters 1 and 4.

of formality and the aspect of feasibility. And even more, the aesthetically beautiful if it makes the pleasant, or fills with joy,[19] the concrete possibility of life in community.

Liberation philosophy considers it ideological for material and spiritual needs to remain separate: they are "always biological-cultural"; one always implies the other. The material realm of culture includes both things and their meaning: they are things-meaning that signify something to the culture but also fulfill a specific function. Technologist ideology (whose essence is materiality) consists of not considering the real (concrete, material, historical) conditioning of technology, and even of science (theory) by treating them as universal.

Today's political domination essentially intersects with poietic, technological, material, productive domination. Hunger and droughts are caused, with the unequal exchange in praxis, as we see all the time. But in poiesis, material essence has different meanings: all products are products of labor; but new technology is produced in a geopolitically dominant place and sold to the same entity that extracts the raw material. Thus, political and economic dominance is concealed through the technological instance. Therefore,

> (...) poietic-technological liberation, it is evident, presupposes, for it to be real, economic, political, and ideological liberation, but at the same time, material liberation is the prerequisite for full liberation in other instances[20].

Here it is very clear that when the militant in praxis demands a political transformation, it must be considered also in terms of an economic-productive change that goes beyond a slogan against neoliberalism; an ambiguous term that means everything and nothing, but which we must precisely fill with appropriate content to channel the theoretical critique articulated to practice.

5. Final Considerations

The Latin American philosophy of liberation has addressed ecology belatedly; it has done so in clear confrontation with institutions created from sustainable development, or a certain environmentalism allied with capitalism. I believe, however, that it is possible to approach the topic through the reflection on poiesis, on production in general. We will attempt a few words on this, based solely on what has been studied here. (a) First, we bring to consideration some of the economics of another Latin American intellectual, (b) then a theoretical exercise on the relationship between praxis, poiesis, and theory. Subsequently, (c) a current discussion with Dusselian conceptual tools from the considered years to evaluate how the categories of that time function.

a) From the material reason, which began with the poiética rationality from the anthropological recovery of Marx to the Dusselian architectural approach to the politics of liberation,[21] there is a long path that we still need to review in another work. For now, some considerations for a possible path that subsumes the ecological. Hinkelammert says:

[19] We emphasize the pleasure of discovering a quote from Levinas.

[20] Dussel, *Filosofía de la producción...*, 99.

[21] Personally, I oversaw the critical negative material principle of liberation politics. Enrique Téllez, «La voluntad material del pueblo», em *Política de la liberación*, editado por Enrique Dussel (Madrid: Trotta, 2023).

> Expressed in theoretical terms, necessity is the urgency to live within a natural circuit of life. Outside this circuit, life is not possible. But no specific end is in itself necessity. The subject specifies their necessity in terms of specific ends within the framework of the possibility condition of their life as a natural being. The simple means-end calculation [instrumental reason] does not ensure this insertion. It may subvert or prevent it. Therefore, as a subject, they must ensure that the means-end rationality is channeled and oriented [projectual, poietic reason] in such a way that it allows insertion into the natural circuit of human life, and thus reproductive rationality [material reason] appears as the founding criterion of means-end rationality. Thus, necessity permeates all means-end rationality activities, and if not treated as the founding criterion, the irrationality of the rationalized appears. It then threatens human life itself.[22]

Beyond the fact that Hinkelammert's thought is compatible with Dusselian thought regarding the material foundation that specifically determines the formal and the feasible,[23] we see that there is already an order that is shaping a series of aspects, or moments, of human life, illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Different methods for different activities.

Act	Scope	Method	Result
Productive work (poiesis)	The factual, fabricative	Projective	Useful arti-fact
Practical operation (praxis)	The operative	Deliberative	Prudent decision
Theoretical knowing (theoría)	The cognizable	Demonstrative	Certain conclusion

Rationality means that if one wants A, then B; manifesting a concept of unlimited power that only needs to want to achieve. And not only is life not so easy, accessible, or available. This concept hides a fetishism that separates its own will (volitional wanting) from the material conditions of possibility (the achievement through people who make the ends possible); a power where the "end justifies the means" resides. But if the end is suicide (as we see now with the irresponsibility towards nature on the brink of collapse), no means would be rational. Thus, the means-end binomial is not enough to enable the continuation of life. Orientation then arises as the possibility of procuring material means that take priority over any other means (non-material) to remain alive. Producing in response to a material need implies wanting to live and, therefore, the urgency of a rationality of vital reproduction, without which we risk losing the sense of existence; and, materially and eventually, choosing death, as the non-possibility of vital reproduction.

[22] Franz Hinkelammert and Henry Mora, *Coordinación social del trabajo, mercado y reproducción de la vida humana* (San José: DEI, 2001), 107-8. The relationship between the "rationalities" we have mentioned, or in any case assumed, is very well expressed in Hinkelammert's words. In his own language, closely following Marx, leaving Hegel behind and confronting Weber and Nietzsche, this Latin American author (by adoption, but of German origin) has developed an entire strand of critical thought that follows Marx word for word, not as a scholar but as a contemporary of his, continuously updating him.

[23] Certainly, I am referring to Dussel's order and not to Hinkelammert's citation. Hinkelammert's most important philosophical work, titled *Crítica de la razón utópica*, addresses the issue of feasibility. It is perhaps pioneering in its treatment of the possibilities of historical systems (political, economic, etc.) and has been a starting point for thinking about the practical question of liberation from contingency, as Dussel shows in chapters 3 and 6 of his 1998 ethics.

b) The theme of production (poiesis) is no longer just the process through which a product is achieved but defines the material possibility of human life in community. And this implies a needy being (as in Sartre), from a certain negativity (as in Hegel) that must (ethically) produce (poietically) food for another needy being as well. That is, from the need arises the production; the need shapes the production, so that absence (as deprivation) signals the product. But this direction between need and production is unidirectional in the material sense only.

The crisis of totality is due to the discovery of negativity; that is, at the concrete level of need, hunger is not an a priori of reason, of any intelligence, but is uncovered as a posteriori, it is volitionally pre-rational. When I am hungry, I simply feel hungry and find myself wanting to satisfy it before discerning what hunger is. When I am alone, I realize that my behavior is not the same as when I suddenly discover the presence of someone else. Thus, intelligence discerns between human-nature interaction and human-human interaction. And in this distinction, the importance of naming the first as proxemics and the second as proximity arises; thus extrapolating, as poiesis and praxis, respectively.

With this, we want to point out that the anthropological definition of the human being based on intelligence (in the paradigm of consciousness), or on practical human acts (praxis), is not enough; it also needs to include productive acts (poietic); and furthermore: the "theoretical knowledge," as outlined in the table, must conclude something certain, the product of a practical deliberation (praxis) and an object (artifact) that originated from a productive act, thus addressing the issue of feasibility. The most important finding is that both praxis and poiesis, practice and production, are defined in terms of negativity and need. It is not enough to define the produced as simply 'something known,' but as 'something consumed,' denying negativity: affirming the anthropological positivity of the human. This is then translated as an affirmation of the victim; specifically, after its recovery made by Marx (post-1981), when he revisits the category of 'living labor,' decisively in his trilogy on this author.

Poiesis is an indispensable reference for thinking about the economy in a strict sense. But it is a practical production (poiesis-praxis, where one deliberates to produce something for someone) and a productive practice (praxis-poiesis, where a product like maize is symmetrically distributed within a community), as they are co-determinants and are framed within the realm of what is feasible, in the realm of possibilities that traverse theoretical reflection. Its approach is appropriately established when considering the issue of production; otherwise, economics would be mere formal reflection, without material reference, from which all production is deliberated. Certainly, both the formal and the material must be articulated, but both realms are equally important when considering the economic field. The philosophy of liberation is perhaps the first school of philosophical thought that takes this material specificity into account in its study; and even more, these categories give rise to a critical ecology that has yet to be written.

c) Today, the greatest problem humanity faces are the natural devastation of the planet which simultaneously carries with it the devastation of human dignity. Both humanity and its material circumstance are two aspects of terrestrial life. Day by day, we see the drama caused by climate fluctuations, but also the cynicism of those who have opted for present-day suicide, eliminating the possibility for future generations to assume their responsibility to decide. In the years referenced in the title of this work, significant events include the oil crisis, the implementation of neoliberalism in

Chile, the first institutional push towards sustainability with the Brundtland Report, the most significant work on the disappearance of the atmospheric ozone layer, the first computational advances to quantify current and future devastation through extrapolations (which have proven very precise), the radical change in minerals that defined today's extractivism, among many others.

Current circumstances require us to think about issues differently from the usual, especially because the hegemonic discourse of sustainability has long since exhausted its relevance but continues to prevail due to its support from both liberalism in politics and capitalism in economics. And it is precisely here that critical thought intervenes to put into crisis (negatively as ecocide) what is taken for granted (positively as sustainability). In this sense, and in a straightforward manner, what mainstream academic thought takes as obvious, as already given and unquestionable, must be made explicit; in our case, material life, which in its precarious dynamic must be affirmed. Theoretically, it must also be articulated with all other aspects of life. When we talk about spirituality, we cannot deny the materiality of the body; in the same way, when we talk about the sublime in music, we cannot deny the importance of musical instruments with which we interact in their materiality, not to mention that vocal cords are strictly considered as instruments. Hence, the emphasis on materiality.

Any theory that evades the material aspect should be regarded as ideological in the sense that it methodologically omits a concrete reference to the negative and material need, and thus falls into an extreme subjectivism that has the potential to speak for material human life in community. This bias is manifested in the formal focus of the economy (capitalism reduced to chrematistics, which Aristotle, early modern scholastics, and currently ecological economics have criticized). In its political aspect through the reductionism of democratic elections where everything is a mere statistical quantification that substitutes political deliberation and the issue of full citizen representation and participation with innate leadership. Neoliberalism is an ideology that seeks to present itself as a policy without people (as mere legal management), but also as an economy without natural limits (as management of formal macro indicators without material reference). On the contrary, the needy people are demonstrating this now with the thousands of Chileans who have taken to the streets to risk the little they have left from the first Latin American experiment of neoliberal implantation through a dictatorship. The material emphasis on production in Dusselian liberation philosophy was initially assumed as Latin American; however, it will later be assumed as global due to the universal pretension of its precepts that can be verified, evaluated, and contrasted by the liberation praxis manifested in many ways at various points on the planet.

It is not surprising that there are increasing instances of praxis related to ecology (an eminently material, productive issue) that have been murdered, such as Paulo Paulino Guajajara (from Maranhão, Brazil, murdered in 2019 at the age of 26; belonging to an organization called Guardians of the Forest). But also, entire peoples, across the globe, such as in the Gaza Strip, creating the largest forced migration in history. A true ecological exodus in the strict sense. It is not the same to produce from and for life (as indigenous peoples do) as it is to produce for capital (as agroindustry does). This puts the entire global capitalism and the network of states subjected to the dictates of a handful of private corporations into crisis. The theory we are building must provide the clearest and most consistent categorical interpretation, on the one hand, with the appropriate strategies to transcend

the current state of exclusion of planetary majorities and, on the other, with the theoretical justification of what guides committed practice, critical praxis.

The young person who takes to the streets risking their life (as in Haiti or Gaza), or the one who preserves the last remnant of dignity in their own habitat (like Berta Cáceres or Guajajara and many others), with the hope for change, demands this from us. Now.

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Biodata

Enrique Téllez Fabiani: Obtained his PhD in Latin American Studies from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, under the guidance of Enrique Dussel, with whom he worked for several decades. He has been a professor at various universities for over 25 years. He is the author, co-author, compiler, and editor of several books on literature, history, and philosophy. For many years, he has organized international events as a member of the Asociación de Filosofía y Liberación (AFyL), which he co-founded with Dussel, and the Asociación Filosófica de México (AFM). He is a member of the Instituto Nacional de Formación Política and the Sistema Nacional de Investigadores. Alongside Dussel, he started a project to publish compilations on the aesthetics of liberation; this led to "Para una estética de la liberación decolonial" and a second volume parallel to Enrique Dussel's Definitive Aesthetics will soon be released.